



CONCEPT OF ALLERGY IN THE CONTEXT OF AYURVEDA

Dr. Syed Munawar Pasha

H.O.D & Professor, Dept. of PG & PhD Studies in Shalakya Tantra, G.A.M.C, Bangalore

ABSTRACT

'Allergy' is an exaggerated immune reaction to usually harmless foreign substances in the environment. Allergy is an age-old concept. One such kind of common allergic condition is Allergic Rhinitis, which occurs commonly in those who are exposed to pollens, dust, and mites. Heredity factors also play an important role in this disease. Some people suffer from this disease during the rainy season followed by flowering of the plants which disburse the pollen around the area. But some have the disease throughout the year.

Around 20-30 % of the Indian population suffers from Allergic Rhinitis and 15 % develop asthma, which used to be much less in the earlier years. The increase in the prevalence of allergy may be attributed to changing environmental factors.

Here we are trying to analyze the concept of Allergy through Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

The different ways through which we can analyze the concept of Allergy in Ayurveda are as follows:

Allergy and concept of Viruddha ahara

The word Viruddha is originated from the root 'Rudhir Avani' by applying the prefix 'Vi'. This leads to two meanings i.e. on combining two, or three things, the stronger one shades or overpowers the weaker ingredients. This has been accepted principally in Ayurveda also. It has been stated that in a combination of many opposite qualities, the majority of the power-packed qualities overpower the weaker qualities¹.

The second meaning of Viruddha indicates the combination of two substances which are not having any affinity for each other. So far this interpretation of Viruddha is concerned, it has been applied in Ayurveda in dietetics and various combinations having such affinity for each other have been discussed at length. On this basis, it may be concluded that such type of ahara or foodstuff which is composed of substances having no affinity at all may be defined as Viruddha or Viruddha ahara i.e., Dravya Viruddha.

Allergy and Concept of Dushivisha

This is an important and unique concept of Ayurveda that can be directly correlated with allergy. Acharya Sushruta has described dushivisha in. According to him when a person is afflicted by artificial or natural toxins, although he is treated with an antitoxic treatment, a complete elimination of these toxins from within the body is not possible. They may remain in a dormant state for quite a long period and end up in a disease².

Acharya Charaka has opined that intake of toxic drugs which are less potent (Hina Veerya) remains in a dormant state within the body for years, without causing any harm to the body. It remains in the latent stage due to covering (Avrita) of Kapha³.

Dhatu Dushti: Chakrapani has commented upon the statement of Acharya Charaka, that "Dushivisha vitiates the Dhatus after the lapse of a long time on obtaining favorable conditions." Explaining further Sushruta has mentioned that "When causative factors like Desha (place), Kala (time), Anna (diet) and Divaswapna (day sleep) are favourable for Dushivisha, it will become more potent, vitiating Dhatus, leading to the manifestation of a disease⁴.

It is seen commonly that Allergic disorders are not affecting every individual in the presence of similar causative factors.

Desha: It is commonly observed, that people of the same area, colony, city state etc. are not affected equally by exposure to a foreign body. Though living in the same environmental conditions, some people remain healthy while only a few of them will be allergic to certain things. Change of colony, city, etc. also plays an important role in the production of allergies.

Kala: This factor can be seen in day-to-day life. It is generally observed, that patients with rhinitis have maximum presentation of signs and symptoms in spring and rainy seasons. The same is with other allergic diseases too. This is explained in detail in Ritu Sandhi's point.

Divaswapna: Day sleep is known as Divaswapna which results in Agnimandya, which is the root cause of all the diseases.

CONCLUSION

Thus by the above data, we can conclude that the concept of Allergy can be seen in Ayurvedic literature in the form of Viruddha ahara, Dushi Visha, etc.. Thus, there is a need to further evaluate the various contexts in the literature where similar incidences have been elaborated.

REFERENCES

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